

January 06, 2004

The Honorable George T. Musler, Chairman
N.H. House of Representatives
Environment and Agriculture Committee
Legislative Office Building, Room 303
Concord, New Hampshire 03301

Re: HB 1229 - An Act Establishing a Commission to Study Bioaccumulative Toxic Chemicals

Dear Chairman Musler and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on HB 1229, which seeks to establish a commission to identify bioaccumulative toxic chemicals of concern in the state, and to prioritize reduction strategies for those with the greatest potential to affect the health of New Hampshire citizens.

Persistent Bioaccumulative Toxics (PBTs) are chemicals that are typically released into the environment in very small quantities, but they do not readily break down. They build up in soils, sediments and plants; and bioaccumulate in animals, fish and people. Even at very low levels of exposure, PBTs can result in serious health effects including reproductive and developmental disorders, suppression of the immune system, and cancer.

There are already several ongoing efforts to address PBTs within the State. New Hampshire has been a national leader in identifying and reducing toxic chemicals in our environment. In 1987, the State enacted the *New Hampshire Air Toxics Control Act* (RSA 125-I), the purpose of which is to “...*promote the public health of the state by reducing human exposure to toxic chemicals by regulating releases of toxic chemicals into the ambient air*”. In addition, New Hampshire was the first state in the nation to establish programs and enact legislation specifically to address human exposure to two important PBTs: mercury and dioxin. These programs have been very successful, and are recognized nationally as effective and efficient models for achieving real PBT reductions. New Hampshire’s mercury and dioxin reduction strategies have also resulted in the formation of a PBT reduction task force comprised of stakeholders from across the State to identify and implement common-sense solutions to statewide PBT-related issues. The Department of Environmental Services (DES) is also already working with the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) on two important related programs: the Environmental Public Health Tracking (EPHT) program and the New Hampshire Biomonitoring Program, both funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). These programs seek to involve New Hampshire stakeholders in the development of systems to help track the relationships between environmental hazards and disease outcomes across the State; and expand the capacity of the Public Health Laboratory to measure body burden and human exposure to environmental contaminants including PBTs. Finally, DES is also a member of the Legislative Commission to Study the Relationship between Public Health and the Environment, which has already identified PBTs as an important environmental health concern for New Hampshire citizens.

Although we believe that PBTs are already receiving adequate attention within State government, the Commission formed by enactment of this legislation would certainly help to coordinate and prioritize these

related efforts. DES supports any effort to help New Hampshire identify and address important environmental health concerns within the State, and to assist us in planning our agenda over the coming years to assure that public health is adequately protected. As a result, DES would welcome the opportunity to work with the Environment and Agriculture Committee to refine the text of this bill to achieve the intended goal of identifying bioaccumulative toxic chemicals of concern in the State, and prioritizing reduction strategies for those with the greatest potential to affect the health of New Hampshire citizens.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer our testimony for HB 1229. Please feel free to call Rick Rumba (Air Toxics Program Manager) at 271-1987, Robert Scott (Air Resources Division Director) at 271-1380 or me at 271-3503 if you have any questions or would like further information.

Sincerely,

Michael P. Nolin
Commissioner

cc: House Environment and Agriculture Committee Members
Representative James T. Dunn (House Education Committee)